GRAZING RESERVES

EASTERN SLOPES AND CENTRAL

Alberta
FORESTRY, LANDS
AND WILDLIFE
Public Lands

88-03289/

TO ALL VISITORS:

You are welcome at all provincial grazing reserves in Alberta, whether you are taking advantage of the recreational opportunities available or just enjoying the scenery and the great outdoors. But a word of CAUTION ....

The reserves are in a primitive state of development for recreational use and some areas have restricted use at certain times of the year. Although maps showing access points and designated routes are posted at each reserve to assist visitors, **always check with the reserve supervisor before entering a reserve.** He can advise you on local conditions and provide other useful information that will help ensure that you have a safe, pleasant visit.

Visitors are asked to observe the Use Respect Program and obtain access permission from the supervisor. Anyone who sees a violation of hunting or fishing regulations should call the nearest Fish and Wildlife Division office or the 24-hour toll free Outdoor Observer number, 1-800-642-3800.

For information concerning grazing reserve operations or the public access program in the Eastern Slopes and Central Region (Buck Mountain, Jack Pine, Medicine Lake, Pembina, Rocky Mountain, Sang Lake reserves), please contact:

Regional Manager
West-Central Grazing Reserves
P.O. Box 411
5606 - 55 Street
Drayton Valley, Alberta T0E 0M0

Telephone: 542-3537

Our final word: please help us keep the reserves clean by packing out everything you take in.

Thanks, and enjoy your visit.

INTRODUCTION

There are 32 provincial grazing reserves - administered by the Public Lands Division of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife - scattered across Alberta.

Some of the reserves, or community pastures, are natural grassland, while others have been partially cleared and seeded to forage. They range in size from 5 962 acres (Purple Springs reserve, in the Lethbridge area) to 76 388 acres (Sage Creek reserve, in the southeastern corner of the province), but the overall average is close to 20 000 acres.

The main purpose of these reserves is to provide affordable summer pasture for Alberta farmers and ranchers on public land, enabling them to use their own land for crop and hay production.

However, in keeping with the government's multiple-use policy for public lands, the reserves also offer a variety of recreational opportunities, including hunting, hiking, trail riding, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, camping and just plain sight-seeing. Others who use grazing land are oil and gas well operators, pipeline companies, gravel haulers, seismic crews and firewood cutters. Large portions of the reserve also provide excellent habitat for wildlife.

To assist recreationists and other visitors, the grazing reserve supervisor at each reserve will provide any information on access to the area.

Alberta's first provincial grazing reserve was established near the southern border of the province during the bleak days of the depression, in response to a request from drought-stricken farmers. In the more than 50 years since then reserves have been set up through the province and now extend as far north as the High Level area. In 1986, more than 73 000 animals grazed on the reserves, which served 1 658 farmers and ranchers.

The reserve program is complementary to other grazing arrangements, not in competition. It serves patrons who cannot afford to take crop land out of production and who, for one reason or another, are unable to use a grazing lease.

Two important aims of all reserves are to operate on a cost recovery basis and to ensure a sustained yield from

the pasture. Patrons are charged a grazing fee calculated on Animal Unit Month (A.U.M.) and pay for salt, minerals and pharmaceuticals. (An A.U.M. is forage provided for one animal unit - mature cow with calf or equivalent - for one month.)

Grazing reserves benefit the local economies in a number of ways, quite apart from the increased market value of the cattle that graze on them. Direct employment is provided for supervisors, seasonal riders and part-time employees, while construction and other projects use local contractors and suppliers where practical. Additional money is channeled into the community in the form of provincial grants paid to municipalities or counties in lieu of taxes on the pastureland. In 1986 these grants totalled $387 870.

Most of the funding for grazing reserve development in recent years has come from the Capital Projects Division of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund as part of a 10-year grazing reserve development program. Previously reserves were funded entirely from the province's general revenues.

The reserves are grouped into four regions of the province - Northeast, Peace River, Eastern Slopes and Central, and Southern. This booklet deals with the Eastern Slopes and Central Region.

Newer reserves in this region posed tough planning problems. The pasture sites were frequently used, especially by hunters and other recreationists. There was also the important question of how to maintain wildlife habitat. These and other demands on the land -some of them conflicting - had to be resolved in planning and developing the site to accommodate the needs of farmers and ranchers who wanted grazing pastures for their cattle.

The cattle that graze in this region's reserves include Hereford breeding herds and exotic breeding herds, with Charolais, Simmental and Limousin bulls. One of the reserves, Medicine Lake, is also used for sheep grazing.

BUCK MOUNTAIN PROVINCIAL GRAZING RESERVE

Buck Mountain Reserve is located about 25.6 km northwest of Winfield. Apart from the mountain itself, which provides a unique 3 100-foot-high view of the surrounding countryside, the topography is very hilly in the east and gently undulating elsewhere, with patches of muskeg. Of the total 17 114 acres, about 10 000 acres have been developed.

The Buck Mountain Reserve opened in 1964, accommodating about 658 head of livestock from 18 producers. Little improvement work had been done on the pasture at that time and the cattle grazed mainly on bushed areas. Early in the summer of 1968 a large portion of the reserve was burned over and aerial seeding of grasses was attempted. Continuing development over the years has increased carrying capacity to the present level.

At present the reserve has a non-breeding herd, two Hereford breeding herds and two exotic herds, with Charolais and Simmental bulls. Grazing cattle in 1986 consisted of 2 445 cows, 2 410 calves, 254 yearling heifers and 87 bulls, for a total of 15 258 Animal Unit Months. Normally the grazing season runs from May 14 to October 22, weather permitting.

A limited amount of seismic activity takes place on the reserve every winter and oil exploration activity on the western side has resulted in about six producing wells. A registered trapline crosses the pasture.

Eighty-seven patrons obtained reserve allotments in 1986. Operations were handled by the supervisor, two seasonal employees, a part-time clerk and casual workers as needed.

Camping, fishing and hunting are among the major recreational activities on the reserve. A campground established on the north shore of Buck Lake provides unserviced sites, fire pits and a concrete small-boat launch, and there is excellent fishing for whitefish and pickerel. In the fall, big game hunting is permitted in most parts of the reserve. Trail riding, snowmobile rallies and cross-country skiing are encouraged, with the permission of the reserve supervisor. A pheasant release program was carried out in the southwest part of the reserve in 1985 to promote bird game hunting.

Visitors should be aware that access to certain fields may be restricted because of cattle grazing. For information about the reserve, please get in touch with the supervisor at headquarters, which is located on SW5-47-5-W5. The telephone number is 682-2298.

PLEASE NOTE:

This is part of the Rocky Mountain House Provincial Grazing Reserve.

Because of the multiple-use design, some areas of the reserve have been left for habitat. Two registered traplines run across the property, which has also been the site of oil and gas exploration.

During summer months when cattle are grazing, access to certain fields may be restricted.

For further information on the reserve, call the supervisor at 845-5335 or visit headquarters, on NW11-43-6-W5.

JACK PINE PROVINCIAL GRAZING RESERVE

Jack Pine Provincial Grazing Reserve, located about 4.4 km south of Highway 16 at Gainford, t. ‹es in 12 404 acres of land that is undulating and hilly in places, with a lot of muskeg and quite a few creeks or drainage. About 7 000 acres have been cleared of poplar and pine and developed to accommodate cattle from surrounding ranches and farms.

The reserve, which has been operating since the 1960s, provided grazing in 1986 for 1 037 cows, 937 calves, 670 yearling heifers and 40 bulls, or 7 988 Animal Unit Months. The cattle are made up of a non-breeding herd, a Hereford breeding herd and an exotic herd, with Charolais, Simmental and Limousin bulls. Depending on the weather, the grazing season usually begins in the middle of May and goes through to the middle of October.

A part-time supervisor is in charge of operating Jack Pine, assisted by a seasonal rider and a part-time clerk. Casual workers are hired when needed. Thirty-eight patrons received allotments at the reserve in 1986.

Recreational activities at the pasture include hunting mule deer and moose in the fall months. Trail riding, snowmobiling and winter and summer camping can be accommodated, with permission from the supervisor. Access to certain fields may be restricted in the summer because of cattle grazing.

As a result of its location close to the power generating plant at Wabamun Lake, the reserve is the site of a junction of two major power lines, and plans are being made for the construction of a substation at Jack Pine.

Although a trapline has not been registered, there is a damage permit line running across the reserve, allowing the trapping of beaver and coyotes.

Information on the reserve and local conditions may be obtained from headquarters on NE3-53-6-W5 (telephone 797-2447).

MEDICINE LAKE PROVINCIAL GRAZING RESERVE

More than 40 oil wells are located on the western and eastern sides of the Medicine Lake Provincial Grazing Reserve, which is about 25.6 km southwest of Winfield, and there is an ongoing drilling program. Seismic activity continues during winter months.

Knob and kettle topography, with a few patches of muskeg, characterize the 16 471 acres that make up the reserve. About 9 500 acres have been developed and the balance is treed, mainly with poplar and willow. Habitat considerations have been taken into account in southern and eastern portions, with bush left for cover and fields shaped irregularly.

Both cattle and sheep grazed on the reserve in 1986 during the May 14 to October 22 season. In the cattle herd were 1 377 cows, 1 150 calves, 486 yearling heifers and 53 bulls. They were divided into a non-breeding herd, a Hereford breeding herd and an exotic breeding herd, with Charolais bulls. The sheep, divided into breeding and non-breeding flocks, consisted of 935 ewes and 25 rams. Overall, the pasture accommodated 10 025 Animal Unit Months.

Development of the Medicine Lake reserve was requested by the County of Ponoka in 1959. A pasture area south of the present site was originally chosen and some fences were erected in 1964. Two years later, however, more suitable areas were found to the north and development shifted in that direction. In the fall of 1967 a commitment was made to sheep producers that the pasture would be developed for sheep grazing but over the years sheep flocks have declined and greater numbers of cattle have entered the reserve.

Medicine Lake had 75 patrons in 1986 (58 in cattle and 17 in sheep). The staff consists of a supervisor, three seasonal riders and a part-time clerk.

Hunting — for elk, mule and white-tailed deer and bird game — is permitted on most parts of the reserve during the hunting season. In an effort to promote bird game hunting, a pheasant release was carried out in 1985 on the eastern side. The reserve is also open for trail riding, snowmobile rallies and cross-country skiing, when permission is obtained from the supervisor. Cattle grazing may restrict access to certain fields in the summer.

Funds for the Medicine Lake reserve come from the Capital Projects Division of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. To date a total of $1 421 922 has been spent.

Two registered traplines are located on the reserve.

To obtain additional information about the reserve, visitors should check with headquarters, on NW28-45-4-W5 (telephone 682-2336).

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE PROVINCIAL GRAZING RESERVE

The Rocky Mountain House Provincial Grazing Reserve, about 36.8 km west of Rimbey, covers 15 842 acres of land that is very rolling in places and gently undulating to sloping elsewhere, with a lot of muskeg in the middle section and swamp spruce and poplar as the main trees. About 6 592 acres have been developed.

Establishment of the reserve was announced in December, 1978, in response to strong representations from groups and individuals pressing for this kind of development in the Rocky Mountain House area. Among those who had asked for a reserve were the Rocky Mountain House Agricultural Society, the Agricultural Development Committee and the local MLA. Development is being funded by the Capital Projects Division of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. To date $1 994 968 have been spent.

In 1984 the first cattle grazed the pasture. In 1986 the herd consisted of 991 cows, 906 calves and 40 bulls. This represented 5 187 Animal Unit Months, but eventually the reserve will handle 7 500 A.U.M.s. Cattle are divided into a Hereford breeding herd and an exotic breeding herd, with Charolais and Simmental bulls. Weather permitting, the grazing season runs from May 14 to October 22.

Reserve staff is made up of a part-time supervisor, one seasonal rider and a part-time clerk. Forty patrons used the pasture in 1986.

Designed for multiple use, Rocky Mountain House reserve offers a variety of recreational opportunities. For hunters there are elk, moose, white-tailed and mule deer and bears, and bird game hunting is being promoted through a pheasant release program. Fishermen can try their luck on the Medicine River and its tributaries, while snowmobilers and trail riders will find several old logging trails they can use, although they first must obtain permission from the reserve supervisor.

Close to the reserve are two improved campgrounds. The one at Medicine Lake provides a campsite, boat launch, rest rooms and cook houses. Improvements at the Open Creek campground include two camping areas, covered picnic tables, drinking water and rest rooms.

PEMBINA PROVINCIAL GRAZING RESERVE

The Pembina reserve opened for cattle grazing in 1985, when 390 cows, 381 calves, 126 yearling heifers and 20 bulls used the pasture, representing 2 800 Animal Unit Months. In 1986, the reserve accommodated 707 cows, 638 calves, 177 heifers and 32 bulls. Livestock is divided into two herds - Hereford breeding herd and an exotic breeding herd, with Charolais and Simmental bulls. Although the weather is the deciding factor, the grazing season normally begins on May 14 and winds up about October 22.

So far, 10 060 acres have been developed since work started at Pembina in 1981, with new pasture being added every year. Funding for development of the reserve comes from the Capital Projects Division of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. To date $2 501 397 have been spent. When fully operational the reserve will handle about 8 000 A.U.M.s. With input from the Fish and Wildlife Division, the reserve was designed to maintain habitat for upland and big game.

The Pembina property is flat to gently undulating and treed mainly with poplar, with areas of spruce and pine. It is located about 9.6 km southeast of Cynthia.

Operations at the reserve are handled by a part-time supervisor, one seasonal rider and a part-time clerk. In 1986, allotments were obtained by 23 patrons.

More than 200 oil wells are located on the reserve, which is located in the heart of the West Pembina oilfield, and there is an on-going exploration program, along with wintertime seismic work. Because of all this oilfield activity, recreationists are advised to exercise caution when using the numerous access roads in the area.

Hunting white-tailed deer and bears is one of the main recreational pursuits on the 19 537-acre reserve. Trail riding, snowmobile rallies and cross-country skiing are encouraged when permission is obtained from the reserve supervisor. To promote bird game hunting a pheasant release was conducted in the southeast part of the reserve in 1985.

Visitors to the reserve should be aware that access to certain fields may be restricted in summer months due to cattle grazing.

Headquarters for Pembina are on SE10-49-10-W5. The telephone number is 894-2326.

SANG LAKE PROVINCIAL GRAZING RESERVE

Operations at the Sang Lake Provincial Grazing Reserve got under way in the spring of 1986, with 170 cows, 148 calves and nine bulls brought to the pasture.

The 12 000-acre reserve, located 33.6 km southeast of Edson, is about one-third developed. When fully operational it will carry about 4 500 Animal Unit Months and the cattle will be divided into a Hereford breeding herd and an exotic breeding herd. Grazing season will start in mid-May and run to October 22, if the weather permits.

The topography at Sang Lake is relatively flat, with some gently rolling areas. Many streams cross the property and there is an abundance of spruce and pine trees.

The reserve was established to look after the grazing needs of farmers and ranchers in the Peers, Carrot Creek and Niton Junction areas. Edson's Agricultural Development Committee was instrumental in getting the reserve developed. Several areas were considered before the present site for the pasture was chosen because of its location, forage growth capacity, access and physical land characteristics.

Funding for the development of the reserve comes from the Capital Projects Division of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. To date $1 816 614 have been spent.

Sang Lake has been designed for multiple use but visitors may find it a rather remote area. Hunting is permitted on most parts of the reserve during the regular hunting season, and game includes elk, bears, moose and white-tailed and mule deer. Carrot Creek and its tributaries provide fishing sites and the reserve is also suitable for trail riding, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing, but permission must be obtained from the reserve supervisor on site. Access to certain fields may be restricted in summer months when cattle are grazing.

The Fish and Wildlife Division has participated in planning Sang Lake and as a result numerous areas are being left for wildlife habitat.

Two oil wells are located on the western side of the reserve and exploration work is continuing in the region.

Sang Lake headquarters are on NW24-52-15-W5. The telephone number is 723-3898.

For additional information cn Alberta's grazing reserves, or to obtain extra copies of this booklet or copies of the other three booklets in the series, please write or telephone:

Information Centre
Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife
Main Floor, Bramalea Building
9920 - 108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2M4

Telephone 427-3590

Or call the nearest Public Lands Division office.

COMMENTS

Have you any comments or suggestions to make as a result of your visit to a grazing reserve? If so, we would like to hear from you. Please use the space provided below, then clip out this page and send it to the address at the bottom of the page.

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